1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

The second mutilation was the only corporeal modification noted by early missionaries and explorers—it was the perforation of the nasal septum for the insertion of a skewer, perhaps of polished stone (though doubtless more commonly of bone), to which swinging objects were attached. One of the most useful records is that of the Jesuit, Padre Joseph Och, who described the nasal attachment as a small, colored stone suspended by cords from the perforated septum, and guarded with such jealous veneration that "one must give them at least a horse or a cow for one" (ante, p. 78); while according to Hardy's record, the nasal fetish is "a small, round, white bone, 5 inches in length, tapering off at both ends, and rigged something like a cross-jack yard."[1]

FIG. 7.—Snake-skin belt.

The custom is apparently obsolete, and nothing is known directly of details or motives.

Excepting these mutilations the corporeal decoration of the Seri is apparently limited to the face-painting: among the 60 individuals at Costa Rica in 1894 there was no trace of tattooing or scarification of face, limbs, or body; there were no labrets or earrings, and neither lips nor ears were pierced, nor were nasal septa observed to be perforated in accordance with the reputed ancient custom; the teeth were neither filed nor drilled; no indications of amputation or other maiming (save the removal of the incisors) were observed—indeed, the instinct for physical markings of symbolic or decorative character, which seems to be normal to primitive men, was apparently satisfied by the prevalent and persistent face-painting among the females.

The extra-corporeal decorative devices are of a meagerness and pov-

[1] Travels, p. 288.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

erty even transcending the poor apparel, flimsy habitations, and generally ill-developed artifacts of the lowly tribe.

The most prominent personal possession is the pelican-skin robe; it is usually made of six skins, slightly dressed and in full plumage, sewed together with sinew in a conventional pattern of such sort as to give the greatest possible expanse consistent with the irregular outlines of the individual skins, and at the same time to display a conventional color pattern on the feathered side, the colors ranging from the dorsal slate to the ventral white of the fowl (as indicated in plate XXIII); sometimes there are only four skins and rarely there are eight, but the conventional arrangement is maintained. Before the beginning of a

FIG. 8—Dried flower necklace.

fairly regular barter at Rancho de Costa Rica, and hence before the introduction of manta and other stuffs, the pelican-skin robes were supplemented by kilts made of mesquite root or other fibers, spun and twisted in the fingers and woven probably on some primitive device no longer in use; but so far as is known these native fabrics were devoid of decorative patterns in color or weave. Less habitually a short wammus or shirt, with long sleeves, made of a material similar to that of the kilt, was worn; but it, too, was without ornamentation, so far as can be ascertained. The remaining article of utilitarian apparel is the belt, usually consisting of a strip of skin (of deer, rabbit, peccary, etc), slightly dressed with the hair on; frequently this is replaced by a cord or braided band of human hair, while the favorite belt of some of the

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

young warriors is a snake skin (such as that illustrated in figure 7); but so far as was seen the belts are not extended into tassels, decorative appendages, or even flowing ends.

The presumptively decorative costumery observed is limited to necklaces, usually of strung seeds, shells, and beads of wood or bone (figures 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13), though animal appendages, such as hoofs, teeth, etc, are sometimes worn. The most highly prized necklace found at Costa Rica was a human-hair cord with nine crotalus rattles attached (figure 14), worn by a young warrior of the Rattlesnake (?) clan. Not the slightest indication of head-dresses was seen (though deer and lion masks are said by Hardy to have been worn on occasions); there were no bracelets, leg-bands, or rings of any description, and the cheap jewelry given to many of the women and youths at Costa Rica was either strung about the neck or concealed; while it is significant that even the showiest jewelry was less appreciated than bits of manta or lumps of sugar. When it is remembered that the Seri have been in occasional contact with Caucasians for over three and a half centuries, the fact that not a single glass bead was found among them becomes significant; and the significance of the simple fact is increased by the virtual absence of that persistent desire and protean use for beads—or bead-sense—so prominent among most primitive tribes.

FIG. 8.—Seed necklace.

FIG. 10.—Nut pendants.

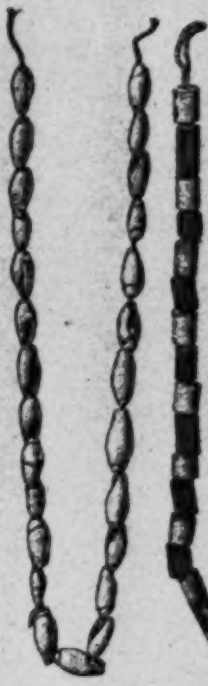

FIG. 11.—Shell beads.

FIG. 12.—Wooden beads.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

Naturally the conditions at Costa Rica were unfavorable to the study of native ideas concerning apparel. The women and some of the children were arrayed chiefly in cast-off habiliments of the rancheras or in nondescript rags, while the men either aped Mexican fashions, like Maabém, or shamefacedly sweltered under the unaccustomed burden of tatterdemalion gear; yet there was a meaningful absence of that desire for finery so prominent among primitive peoples—a fact quite as eloquent in itself as the absence of bracelets and bangles, tassels and trappings. It is probable that the shamans and mystery-bedged crones in the depths of Seriland enhance their influence by the aid of symbolic paraphernalia (indeed, some inkling of such customs is found in the meager records of earlier visitors);[1] yet the conspicuous feature of Seri costumery is the dearth of decorative devices.

FIG. 13—Necklace of wooden beads.

The habitations of the tribe are the simplest of jacales—mere bowers, affording partial protection from sun and wind, but not designed to shed rain or bar cold. Half a dozen of these were examined at Costa Rica in 1894 and probably a hundred more, in various stages of habitability, in Seriland proper in 1895, yet not the slightest trace of decoration was observed—the structures are plainly and barrenly utilitarian in every feature. The same may be said of the balsas in which the Seri navigate their stormy waters; for the peculiarly graceful curves of the craft evidently stand for nothing more than the mechanical solution of a complex problem in balanced forces, wrought out through the experience of generations, while the simple reed bundles are absolutely devoid of paint, of superfluous cord, of fetishistic appendages or markings, of tritons, nereids, or other votive symbols at bow or stern, and of industrially superfluous features or attachments in general—indeed, the only appendages discovered were one or two simple wooden marlinspikes (shown in figure 26), thrust among the reeds to be at hand in case of need for repairs.

Among the utensils employed in the primitive householdry of the Seri the most conspicuous and at the same time the most essential is the olla, or water-jar. Its technical features are described elsewhere; but it may here be noted that the olla is the central artifact about which the very

[1] Hardy noted the use of "a small leathern bag, painted and otherwise ornamented", as a medicine rattle (Travels, p. 362), and also described a wind-symbol and an effigy used for thaumaturgic purposes (ibid., pp. 284, 285).

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

life of the tribe rotates: since the clans never reside and rarely camp nearer than 3 to 15 miles from the aguaje, a large part of the water consumed must be transported great distances in these vessels; since the region is one of extreme aridity, the lives of small parties often depend on the integrity of the olla and on the care with which the fragile vessel is protected from shock or overturning; and hence the utensil must occupy a large if not a dominant place in everyday thought—indeed, the fact that it does so is attested by constant custom and also by its employment as the most conspicuous among

FIG. 14—Rattlesnake necklace.

the mortuary sacrifices. Thus, the relation of the Seri olla to its makers and users is parallel with that of the ever-present earthen pot to the Pueblo people, or that of the cooking basket to the acorn-eaters of California, save that its relative importance is enhanced by the fewness of activital lines and motives in Seri life. Moreover, this most characteristic utensil is established and hallowed in Seri thought by immemorial associations: its sherds are sown over the hundred thousand square miles of ancient "despoblado" from Tiburon to Caborca, Magdalena, Río Opodepe, and Cerro Prieto, and are scattered through the 20 feet of shells forming Punta Antigualla (perhaps the oldest shell mound of America); and all the sherds from the range

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

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152
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[854]
[301]

FIG. 9 (upper). *Seri children showing variety of expressions at unaccustomed experiences.*
FIG. 10 (lower left). *Young woman with sickly baby.*
FIG. 11 (lower right). *Two girls, the shorter unmarried.*

3:Davis & Dawson F-5 (1823-1949) 1945
MU31 Sect MU31

[301]
[302]
[386]
[516]

FIG. 11. PAINTING THE FACE
USING A RED PIGMENT OBTAINED FROM THE TOROTE.

223 lice-infested carcasses were then gathered
264 and brought to a central place among the stinking rocks where a gluttonous feast was held in the dark, the long ahungered tribesmen gorging themselves with the soft entrails and succulent parts, and carousing in the carnage until overcome by slumber.

281 The day following the slaughter, the
294 matrons collected the carcasses with least damaged plumage and carefully removed the skins, which were then gnawed and sucked clean of flesh and grease and dried in the sun (Fig. 8). From two or more of these skins they made a kilt or robe (Figs. 1, 2), the principal apparel, not so much for protection from cold as from the scratch and prick of the abounding spines and thorns of Seriland. The skins were sewed with sinew and often held in place on the body by a
283 cord made of human hair (Fig. 1). The
302 culture of their long, luxuriant hair, indeed, was an important matter. They brushed their hair regularly with a brush fashioned

[p. 200(A)]

462 desert plants or littoral fishlets from tide-pools
or of the shellfish. Both men and women will
[224] bring in an occasional rattler, although women
957 are more likely to do this because they spend more
[883] time in the desert. Children of both sexes are
engaged in the female occupations here, but ado-
lescent boys already join in their fathers' hunts
on land or sea.

342 Housing has undergone some changes. In the
184 desert or on Tiburon the Indians construct the
kind of shelter they did in the recorded past,
an ocotillo frame, bent over in the middle and
covered up with dried plant debris and twigs
from the desert, or with the sail cloth. But in
Desemboque they have more substantial houses—
of wattle and adobe, with flat roofs, rectangular
or square, often with corrugated tin or drift
planks and other debris piled up on top, or along
the walls.

178 In the remainder of their material culture, not
much has been left from years past although one
must remember that from the very beginning of
[291] recorded Serian history it has been of a most
412 meager sort. Pelican robes, which some Seris ap-
323 parently still wore in 1930 are gone for good.
301 So are the stone tools. So is the pottery which had
[291] probably disappeared in Kroeber's time. The hu-
man hair necklace with rattlesnake rattles is also
a thing of the past. The rattlesnake skin belts
McGee (1898:170) described and figured are
probably all gone. I havn't seen or heard of any.

412 But what remains much as they had been in
285 1894 are the bone-awls. These are made of burros'
carpals and the blossoming of basketry, owing to

[P. 8A]

9:Malkin E-5 (1953-1955)1962 NU31 Seri NU31

412 the stimulus of the tourist trade, has kept this
285 tool alive. Another survival from McGee's times
301 are *Olivella* shell necklaces.

Seri Antecedants and Relationship

174 For complete lack of archaeological information, little can be deduced about Seri antecedents. Speculations can be made only on the basis of similarities of their post-historic cultures with the cultures of the surrounding tribes.

171 Individual traits between the Seri and their
174 neighbors show discordant connections. Comparative data assembled by Kroeber, Beals and Driver & Massey suggest almost equal possibilities of derivation from the Cochimí, the Gila, Pima and the Yuman tribes but favor much less connections to the south. Much is made of the basketry. Archae-
[172] ological basketry has been unearthed since the work of Kroeber and Beals was published (Massey, MS.), but it is different from the Serian. Seri basketry shows closest relationship to Pima-Papago complex (Malkin, MS.). But part of this may be not only post-historic but certainly very recent and is hardly an argument in favor of the Pima-Papago connections.

Kroeber (1930:5) thought that on the face of it, the Seri showed greatest affinity to the Cochimí on the grounds of their general development of economy—the hunting and gathering subsistence. But he also pointed out that relationship with the Cochimí may rest ultimately on the linguistic analysis if the Cochimí language can still be recorded—which is most dubious.

[P. 8 B]

MOLLUSCA

VII

USES

Species	Food Prep.	Food Past	Decoration Prep.	Decoration Past	Trade Prep.	Trade Past	Bait
Octopus bimaculatus	x	x				x	x
Codakia distinguenda		x					
Laviocardium elatum		x			x[1]		
Carditomera affinis	x	x					
Acmaea dalliana			x	x	x		
Crucibulum spinosum		x	x	x	x		
Chione undatella	x	x					
Chione californiensis	x	x					
Pteria peruviana	x	?	x	?	x		
Volsella capax	x	x					
Olivella dama			x	x	x		
Cyprea annettae				x[4]			
Tegula rugosa		x		x		x	
Conus regularis		x[3]		x	x	?	
Phyllonotus erythrostomus		x				x	
Turritella broderiana		x[3]			x	?	
Polinices reclusiana	x	x					
Chlamys subdudosa	x	?					
Atrina maura	x	?			x[4]		
Navicula pacifica		x					
Turbo fluctuosa	x	?			x		
Solenostira pallida			x	?	x		
Ceritium stercusmuscarum			x				
Trivia radiana			x				
Ficus ventricosus	x						
Nioche bistriatus	x	x					

[1]Occasionally used as dip spoon

[2]Supposedly used in the past for money

[3]In the past "giants of 300-400 maybe years ago have eaten it."

[4]Only pearls

These figures show then 26 out of 37 species exploited economically in some way, that is 70%. These figures show increase over the figures I have published previously (1956) which were 21 out of 36 species and 58% respectively. The corrected figures are the result of brief additional field work in 1955.

Food

A good part of the molluscan forms are used as food. Altogether 19 species are listed as such, although out of these, only 11 were reported as being part of the diet today while the remainder only in the past. It is obvious that there has been progressive decrease in the Seris' dependence on the molluscan diet within the past few generations.

Four of the species reported as part of the Seri diet at various times had been collected from the kitchen-middens. There are: *Pteria peruviana*, *Chlamys subdudosa*, *Volsella capax*, and *Navicula pacifica*. Of these four, *Navicula* has been reported as eaten in the past "maybe 100 years ago, but not

262 now," while the *Volsella* has been eaten in the past
172 just as much as it is now. The find of these four species in great numbers in the kitchen-middens only indicates that they probably were an important part of the Seri past. Historical records are scarce and no archaeology had ever been done in the region, except for Gifford's (as yet unpublished) excavations at Caborca. But Caborca is far away from the coast. Strong circumstantial evidence suggests that a good many of the kitchen-middens represent relics of the Seris' past encampments.

262 The verbal data for the Seris' past use of some species of molluscs in their diet is uncertain or unavailable. But it is safe to assume that if the animal is eaten today, then it certainly had been [174] also eaten in the past. It is not probable that the Seris should suddenly develop a taste for obscure kinds of animal food, while the entire trend had been in the other direction.

Of the different species the augur shell and the cone shell were said to have been "eaten in the past by the giants. Maybe 300-400 years ago." It is [173] hard to account for this idea except that it probably refers to a myth.

Preparation

252 Preparation of the mulluscan food differs little, if at all, from any other food of animal origin. The animals are simply separated from the shell, the meat is dropped in water and boiled, usually [263] for half an hour. Few ingredients other than salt are added and their use depends entirely on the availability of cash and on the individual tastes of the Indians. As far as I could tell, there is no differentiation in this for people of different sexes
262 or ages. Also there is no preference for different parts of the body.

Preferences

Some species are more liked than others, but this is related to their size rather than anything else. There does not appear to be any belief in the toxicity of molluscs and the occasional justification of the inedibility has been expressed in terms of size. Some species, it had been asserted, are not eaten simply because they are too small to bother. Only *Cardium consors*, as one of the in- * [825] formants suggested, is venomous, but even this, to him, seemed uncertain and dubious for he said "maybe it is venomous."

Other Uses

301 a) *Decoration*: A considerable number of shells
* 825 were reported as used for decoration. The tabulation indicated altogether 10 species that had been or still are used for ornament. Three of these are discarded now, seven still in use. This is mostly in the form of various sorts of necklaces, which the women string on ordinary thread. *Solenostira pallida* is supposed to be worn as such by women and children, while *Cerithium stercusmuscarum* by the boys only. But I have never seen either of them make use of it in any way. On the other hand, *Trivia radiana* and the *Olive shell* are much

9:Malkin E-5 (1953-1955)1962 MU31 Seri MU31

301 worn. I have observed women wearing necklaces
825 of the former and women and very young boys of the latter. The olive shell, incidentally, is made into two sorts, the natural, unroasted shells which retain a greenish-purple, mottled color and the white. The white pallid color is achieved by roasting the shells over fire. The necklaces are mostly made up of either colored or white but occasionally they may be made of mixed shells and then they are usually alternately interlaced, now with one, now with another.

825 b) *Utensils:* Two species had been reported used as occasional drinking or dipping cups and spoons, *Lavicardium elatum* and *Ficus ventricosus*. *Ficus* is presently discarded, but the *Lavicardium* is still occasionally used so. There is no doubt that the incidental use of these shells increases during longer fishing expeditions when the Seris are apt to lose some of their gear.

[412] [415]

[436] c) *Money:* Interestingly, the brown cowry was supposed to have been used as a means of exchange, as money—in the past. If this is so, then the selection of this shell for such purpose is not surprising considering its widespread use throughout the world.

[171]

439 d) *Trade:* Altogether 12 species had been re-
825 ported as traded off either in the past or present. The trade importance of various species of shells varies with the demand of the market and sometimes may be only sporadic and short-lived. Only a few of the species had been indicated as having been of any trade importance in the past, and it may well be that the Seris did not register the species which may have been briefly sold to and outsiders during the short-lived fads of demand. It may be said in general that the trade importance of the shells increases and that greater variety of them are exploited now than formerly. This is surely owing to the increasing accessibility of the Seri country and the increasing tourism, not only visitors from Hermosillo, but also from such far flung places as Tucson, Phoenix and even Los Angeles.

[177]

In some instances, the Seris had no idea what the shells were sold for. The augur shell is on and off sold to some American traders who show up in Desemboque once in a while and for whom the Seri women accumulate these shells. But what uses were made of these, the Indians surely didn't know. Neither did they know what uses were made of the *Murex* shell and the *Turbo*, both of which were periodically sold in bulk to Hermosillo. On the other hand, they had some idea what uses were made of some other shells. *Pteria* and *Atrina* contain pearls and these are much desired. Especially the pearls of *Atrina* which are sold to the Mexicans or to the visitors for 25-50 pesos each and therefore have immense value, for the local market. The *Pteria* shells are said to be used for button making, and the Seris themselves claim that they make buttons of this shell. The most important of all, however, at least at the time of my visits in 1953 and 1955, was the olive shell. It was easily the most commonly and most numerously collected shell of all that the Seris ever collected. Owing to the scarcity of it in Desembo-

[435] [237] [226]

261 will exist on very small rations, bear burdens, and walk long dis-
262 tances. Their food is anything that walks, flies, crawls or swims,
[252] and they eat it raw with the same relish that we eat it cooked. There is but one thing they will not eat; they draw the line on the Gila monster. They are the most perfect type of human being adapted to desert conditions that exists today. Convey them blindfolded many miles into the heart of the desert, empty-handed, remove their blinders, and they will find both food and water where others would perish. The Papagos and Yaquis do almost as well."

302 We gave the women a small bag of flour and three or four cubes of
[123] sugar around, and the men three packets of tobacco each and two boxes of matches. Matches with them are very precious and are rarely used. Rather than use a match a woman came over to our fire and borrowed some coals to rebuild her fire. From this point the nearest matches are a good deal over one hundred and twenty miles distant, so they have to economize in every thing.

422 Each rag is valuable, and flour, sugar, coffee and rifle shells
[434] are absolutely priceless. While they know money, it has no value here.
[437] Only commodities go here. The most highly prized things are boards to
[389] make boats and rifle shells to get game and protect themselves. All empty shells are saved, the primer punched out, straightened, a match head put in, a little pinch of powder on top, the shell filled up, a long bullet inserted, the shell pinched tight, and a fresh set of ammunition is made.

142 The women and children certainly did look wild. Their hair was
291 frowsy and unkempt, their skirts and waists a patchwork of dirty rags
302 coming just below the knees; their features seamed and hard and cruel. Their complexion was very dark. They had no under garments. The children wore only a dirty shirt coming a little below their thighs, and even that is ragged. One or two of the women had a dirty bandanna over their heads. How I wished I could have seen them in their ancient, picturesque pelican-skin kilts!

302 I happened to witness the operation of a Seri beauty parlor. A
[224] mother brushed the hair of her thirteen-year-old daughter with a brush
[293] made from the fibrous roots of a certain grass tied together with
[515] sinew. During the operation if she came across a *piojo*, and she found several, she plucked him away from his feeding ground and dropped him in the fire.

The hair neatly brushed, the mother then mixed paint in a small vessel and with a tiny stick painted a bright blue design under the eyes and across the cheeks and nose, and then she added narrow white stripes, which, contrasting with the blue and the dark skin, produced a very striking effect. This paint is easily removed and the women often paint and remove three different face designs in one day.

304 I did not see tattoo work on either men or women, nor did they
• 301 wear ceremonial feathers as did our western Indians.

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[301]

Seri beauties

123 223 [262] birds. As soon as the skin was off the breast was laid on top of the coals and roasted. The meat was red as raw beef, but it was free of fishy flavor and tasted excellent. The Indians ate pelican flesh till daylight.

252 [123] We gave them a generous helping of flour in a pail and this with water from a canteen, Santo stirred vigorously with a stick and then kneaded the dough with his hands until it was of the right consistency. He rolled hunks of this into little balls of dough about the size of golf balls, which he laid on his blanket. The boys picked these up, patted them flat like pancakes, scraped away ashes and sand from the edge of the fire, placed their pancakes in the hollow, covered them with hot ashes and hot sand, and in about three minutes pulled them out all baked brown. They shook the ashes and sand from them, leaving them clean and ready to eat. I am telling this in detail to show how simple cooking can be done without a dutch-oven, frying pan, or cooking grease, far from civilization.

281 [123] We were soon paddled across to their village on the shores of Kino Bay and the skins turned over to Mrs. Santo. The skins had been split down the back, leaving the breast unmarred. The wings and legs had already been removed, and she sewed the skins together with sinew recovered from the birds. The boys had secured an extra pelican making six, three to a side, then placed together and sewed lengthwise, making a robe three and a half feet wide by seven feet long.

[342] [291] [301]

Pegging out and drying a Pelican skin robe by a Seri Indian woman - 1936

To use the clay as paint, a bit of water is placed on a stone and the clay is rubbed into it to make a paste. It is then applied to the face (Fig. 4). It spreads smoothly and adheres firmly to the skin. The blue was formerly used for decorating pottery, clay figurines, headdresses, fetishes, arrows, wrist guards, and cane gaming sticks, as well as for face painting. In curing the sick, the shaman sometimes used the blue for painting crosses on the patient's chest. Also, women made necklaces using beads formed from the blue clay.

FIG. 4. Painting the face with the finished pigment.

302

302 TOILET--shaving and depilation; hair styles (e.g., cutting, parting, arranging); care of the hair (e.g., washing, brushing); care of the nails (e.g., cutting, filing); body painting; use of cosmetics, ointments and perfumes; age, sex, and status differences in toilet; associated beliefs and practices; etc. See also:

Electrical appliances	403	Bathing and laving	515
Combs, brushes, etc.	412	Decorative art	531
Barbering tools	413	War paint	714
Elimination	514	Menstrual hygiene	841

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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GROUP OF SERI INDIANS ON TRADING EXCURSION

[FACING P. 121]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

its astounding protective efficiency being attested by the readiness with which the Seri run through cactus thickets so thorny as to stop horses and dogs, or over conglomerated spall-beds so sharp that even the light coyote leaves their trail. In the absence of measurements it may merely be noted that the hands and feet of the Seri are materially larger, not only absolutely but relatively to their stature, than those of neighboring tribesmen or even of Mexican and American workmen. And, on the whole, it may be said that in their proportions, as in their stature and color, the Seri are strikingly uniform, their range being less than that commonly observed in contemporary tribes, and the differences between them and their neighbors much exceeding the range among themselves. 142

Somatically distinctive as is the Seri at rest, he (or she) is much more so in motion—though the characteristics so readily caught by the eye are not easily analyzed and described. Perhaps the most conspicuous element in their walk is a peculiarly quick knee movement, bringing the foot upward and forward at the end of the stride; this merges into an equally quick thrust of the foot forward and downward, with toe well advanced, toward the beginning of the next stride; and these motions combine to produce a singular erectness and steadiness of carriage, the body moving in a nearly direct line with a minimum of lateral swaying or vertical oscillation, while the legs neither drag nor swing, but spurn the ground in successive strokes. Thus the walk seems notably easy and graceful, while the walker carries an air of alertness and reserve power, as if able to stop short at any point of a pace or to bolt forward or backward or sidewise with equal facility; he simulates the "collected" animal whose feet tap the ground lightly and swiftly while his body appears to yield freely to voluntary impulse. In this deer-like or antelope-like movement all the Seri are much alike, and all are decidedly removed from their neighbors, even the light-footed Papago. The component motions are most conspicuous in leisurely walking, though the resultant movement is more striking in rapid walk or the incredibly swift run of youths and adults. The general movement is akin to that shaped by the habit of carrying burdens balanced on the head, as the Seri women actually carry their water ollas for astonishing distances; but the carriage is shared—indeed, best displayed—by the warriors and growing boys, who are not known to carry water in this way. 481 [482]

Among the conspicuous but nondistinctive somatic characters of the Seri is luxuriant straight hair habitually worn long and loose. Commonly the hair is jet-black for most of the length, growing tawny toward the tips; sometimes it is black throughout, while again the tawny tinge, or perhaps a bleached appearance, extends well toward the scalp. Age-grayness seems not to be characteristic; the most aged matrons known have no more than a few inconspicuous and scattered gray hairs, though the pelage of some is slightly bleached or faded. None of the warriors at Costa Rica showed the slightest grayness except 142 [302] 142 145

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

142 Mashém (aged about 50 years), who had a few gray strands about the
145 temples; but it may be significant that the hair of the tribal outlaw
Kolusio, who has lived with white men for full three score years, is iron-
[115] gray. Kolusio's pelage is trimmed in Caucasian fashion; that of Mashém
is cut off mid-length in a manner exciting comment, if not derision,
on the part of his fellows and others, and resulting in his (Spanish)
[302] sobriquet, Pelado (literally, Peeled, or idiomatically, Shorn); but with
few exceptions the hair is kept long as it can be made to grow, and
receives careful attention to this end. Naturally the length is some-
what variable; in many cases it depends to or slightly below the waist,
while in other cases it merely sweeps the shoulders; and in general it
appears to increase in both length and luxuriance not only throughout
adolescence, but up to late maturity, for the best pelages are presented
by moderately aged persons, while none of the youths are so luxuriantly
tressed as their elders. Not the slightest trace of baldness appears.
The infantile pelage is short, brownish in color, soft or even silky, and
inclined to curl toward the tips. It is not until the age of several
months that the hair begins to acquire the adult character, and at
least some children retain traces of the infantile pilary character up to
5 or even 10 years; and none of the children display such jet-black
shock-heads as are frequently found among other tribes, whose adult
pelage may nevertheless be much less luxuriant than that of the Seri.
On the whole, it may be said that the Seri hair is luxuriant and vigorous
beyond the aboriginal average, and that it, like various other somatic
features, indicates a relatively late maturation in the life-history of the
individual.

Both sexes are beardless. The female faces seen were entirely free of
142 strong pilary growth; one or two of the warrior faces showed scattering
hairs, and Mashém sported a feeble and downy but jet-black mustache
with an exceptional number of scattered hairs about the chin; while
Kolusio shaved regularly, and might, apparently, have grown moder-
ately stiff but straggling mustaches and beard. Axillary hair seems to
be wanting; pubic hair is said to be scanty; otherwise the bodies are
practically hairless (more nearly so than those of average Caucasians).

The teeth are solid, close-set, and even, and impress the observer as
large; they close with the upper incisors projecting slightly beyond
the lower denture in the usual manner.

The skeletal characteristics of the Seri are known only from a single
128 specimen obtained in the course of the 1895 expedition in such manner
141 as to establish the identification beyond shadow of question. This
skeleton was submitted to Dr Aleš Hrdlička for measurement and
discussion.[1]

In making his examination, Dr Hrdlička compared the unquestion-

[1] A separate cranium was obtained by the 1895 expedition, having been sought and picked up by a Mexican member of the party in verification of his account of the killing of one of the Seri; but, in view of the possibility of erroneous identification, this skull was not submitted in connection with

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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SERI MOTHER AND CHILD

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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GROUP OF SERI BOYS

[p. 144 A]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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MASHEM, SERI INTERPRETER

[p. 146 A]

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"JUANA MARIA," SERI ELDERWOMAN

[p. 150 A]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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THE HOLLISTON PRINTING CO., BOSTON

TYPICAL SERI WARRIOR

[p. 154 A]

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TYPICAL SERI MATRON

[p. 156 A]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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SIOUX MATRON

Cp. 160 A

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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YOUTHFUL SERI WARRIOR

[p. 162 A]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

DEMOTIC CHARACTERS

000 The Seri, like all other peoples, are characterized by various collective attributes which vastly transcend in interest and importance the somatic attributes exhibited by the individuals. These superorganic attributes are essentially activital—i. e., they represent what the people *do* rather than what they merely *are;* and in both collective and activital aspects they serve to distinguish the human realm from the organic realm, and to afford a basis for the classification of mankind—i. e., they combine to form demotic characters.

128 The demotic characters of the Seri, like those of other peoples, may be classed as (1) esthetic, (2) industrial, (3) institutional, (4) linguistic, and (5) sophic; and in this order the essentially human attributes of the tribe (except the last named) may be described. It is a matter of deep regret that the data concerning the demotic characters of the tribe are too meager to afford more than a mere outline of their activities, and that their suggestive mythology must be passed over for the present.

SYMBOLISM AND DECORATION

FACE-PAINTING

302 One of the most conspicuous customs of the Seri is that of painting the face in designs by means of mineral pigments. Of the 55 members of the tribe shown in the group forming plate XIII, 28 (in the original photograph; a somewhat less number in the reproduction) exhibit face-painting more or less clearly, and this proportion may be regarded as typical; i. e., about half of the tribe are painted.

On noting the individual distribution of face-painting, it is found to be practically confined to the females, though male infants are sometimes marked with the devices pertaining to their mothers, as adult warriors are said to be on special occasions; and so far as observed all the females, from aged matrons to babes in arms, are painted, though sometimes the designs are too nearly obliterated by wear to be traceable. About 35 of the individuals shown in the group (plate XIII) are females; of these, fully four-fifths showed designs or definite traces of the paint, while the remaining fifth bore traces too faint to be caught by the camera; but none of the men or larger boys were painted. In the smaller group shown in plate XIV all of the females display paint, as does the small boy in the center also, while the man (husband of the middle-aged matron) reveals no trace of the symbol. The two pictures typify the prevalence and the distribution by sex of the painting.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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SERI BELLE

[p. 164 A]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

The painted designs vary among different individuals, but are fairly persistent for each. The prevailing design at Costa Rica in 1895 was that of the aged matron known as Juana María (plate XVIII), with variations in detail such as that exhibited by her unmarried daughter Candelaria (the Seri belle shown in plate XXIV); next in frequency were the designs, in white and red, exhibited by the matrons portrayed in plates XX and XXII. Other designs observed are indicated in plate XXVI. The variations in individual designs are apparently due either to varying care in the application of the paint or to the degree of obliteration by wear—e. g., the withered Juana María sometimes put on her design askew and was negligent of details, while the blooming Candelaria greatly elaborated the details of the pattern and carefully perfected the symmetry of the whole when preparing for her full dress sitting before the camera (plate XXIV), so that her design was then gorgeous by contrast with the nearly obliterated blur of a half-hour before. The designs are renewed every few days, especially for ceremonious occasions, and hence are practically permanent.

When grouped in relation to their wearers, the designs are found to exhibit family connection. Thus, Juana María's design is repeated, with greater elaboration of detail and with a pair of supplementary marks, in that of her daughter Candelaria; the winged symbol of the Seri matron portrayed in plate XX is repeated with minor variations in that of her daughter, the Seri maiden pictured in plate XXV; while the symbols of the mother and infant daughter depicted in plate XV are essentially alike. It is noticeable, too, that in the nearly spontaneous arrangement of individuals in the group shown in plate XIII there is a tendency toward subgrouping by symbols; and it was constantly observed that the family groups gathered about particular jacales (such as that shown in plate XIV) displayed corresponding designs, though there were frequent visitors from neighboring jacales bearing other designs. Briefly, all the observed facts, as well as the supplementary information gained by inquiry, indicate that the designs are hereditary in the female line, but are susceptible of slight modification both in elaborateness of detail and in the addition of minor supplementary features.

The principal apparatus and materials used in the face-painting are illustrated in plate XXVII. The chief pigments are ocher, gypsum, and the rare mineral dumortierite; the ocher yields various shades of red, ranging from pink to brown; the gypsum affords the white used in most of the designs; while the dumortierite is the source of the slightly varying tints of blue. So far as was observed, the pigments are not blended by mixing, though there is some blending due to overlapping in application. The ocher is commonly extracted and transported as lumps of ocherous clay or ocherous gypsum (plate XXVII, figures 1 and 5), though it is sometimes reduced to powder and transported in bits of skin or rag, or in cylinders of cane (plate XXVII, figures 3 and 4); and it is

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

prepared by trituration with a pebble or rubbing with the fingers, usually in a shell cup. Sometimes the shell used for the purpose is the valve of a *Cardium*, which serves indiscriminately as cup, spoon, skin-scraper, etc; but preference is apparently given to thick and strong shells, such as the wave-worn valve of *Chama* (?), shown in plate XXVII, figure 7, which are consecrated to the use and eventually buried with the user, together with a supply of the paint (like that illustrated in the cane cylinder—figure 4—which was a mortuary sacrifice). The gypsum is usually carried in natural slabs or other fragments, perhaps rounded by wear (plate XXVII, figures 6 and 8); it is prepared by wetting and rubbing two pieces together, the larger being reduced to metate shape by the operation. The dumortierite was observed only in the form of a pencil made by pulverizing the substance and mixing with sufficient clay to give consistency. The several pigments are applied wet by means of human-hair brushes kept for the purpose, the process occupying from half an hour to three or four hours for the more elaborate designs. So far as observed at Costa Rica in 1894, the paints were mixed in water only; but since painting outfits found on Tiburon island in 1895 were smeared with grease, it is probable that either water or fats may serve for menstrua, at the convenience of the artists. Commonly the process of painting is measurably cooperative. The matron usually depicts her devices on the faces of her daughters up to the age of 12 or 15 years, when they learn to make the applications themselves; and frequently two or more women (usually those with similar devices) work together in preparing and applying the pigments, each laying the paint on her own face and apparently guiding her hand partly by the sense of feeling and partly by suggestions from her coworkers; but Candelaria and some other of the younger women at Costa Rica frequently worked alone, aided by a mirror in the form of a shallow bowl of water set in the shadow while the brilliant desert glare fell full on the face.

The mines yielding the pigments were not located. The geologic conditions are such that the ochers are undoubtedly abundant; but it is probable that the gypsum is uncommon and confined to a remote locality or two, and that the dumortierite is rare and scanty here as elsewhere. The care with which the paints are preserved, prepared, and applied, the fact that they are indispensable feminine appurtenances even on the longest journeys, and their sacred rôle in the mortuary customs, all combine to indicate that they are among the most highly prized possessions of the people and by far the most precious of their minerals.

The somatic functions of the designs are esoteric, yet an inkling of their meaning was obtained through Mashém, the interpreter at Costa Rica in 1894; from his expressions it appears that the designs are sacred insignia of totemic character, serving to denote the clans of which the tribe is composed. But three clans were identified, and

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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SERI MAIDEN

Cp. 166 A)

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

those only with some uncertainty, viz, the Turtle clan,[1] denoted by the symbols of Juana Maria (plate XVIII) and Candelaria (plate XXIV and the upper left figure in plate XXVI); the Pelican clan, denoted by the designs of two typical matrons (plates XX and XXII) and a typical maiden (plate XXV), and probably also by those of the medio-lateral figures in plate XXVI; and (still less certainly) the Rattlesnake clan, denoted by the symbol of the lower left figure in this plate. The special somatic values of the colors also are esoteric, and were not ascertained; even in the case of the simple pelican design, the difference in meaning between the solid red pattern of one group and the similar pattern of white in another group was successfully concealed. So, too, the significance of the various subordinate or supplementary devices—the distinct border-line shown in plate XX, the lower cheek devices in plate XXIV, the separate chin mark in plate XXV, the fetish-like symbols on the lower cheeks in the lower left figure of plate XXVI, etc—eluded inquiry; while some of the minor features of both form and color were sufficiently variable in the devices borne by different faces of the same family, and even in successive paintings of the same face, to suggest some individual freedom in carrying out the detail of the generally uniform designs.

The telic functions, or ultimate purposes, of the face-painting are also esoteric, though not beyond the reach of inference from the somatic functions, coupled with general facts of zoic and primitive human customs. Even at first sight the painted devices bring to mind the directive markings of lower animals defined by Professor Todd[2] and interpreted by Ernest Seton-Thompson;[3] and in view of the implacably militant habit of the Seri it would seem evident that the artificial devices are, at least in their primary aspect, analogous to the natural markings. On analyzing the directive markings of animals, it is convenient to divide them into two classes, distinguished by special function, usual placement, and general relation to animal economy: the first class serve primarily to guide flight in such manner as to permit ready reassembling of the flock; they are usually posterior, as in rabbit, white-tail deer, antelope, and various birds; and they primarily signify inimical relations to alien organisms, with functional exercise under stress of fear. The second class of markings serve primarily for mutual identification of approaching individuals; as comports with this function, they are usually facial, or at least anterior; and their functional exercise is normally connected with peaceful association—though the strongly emphasized facial symbols of the males doubtless

[1] This tendency may be the clue; it was described as a water monster instrumental in the creation and gave the food, but the identification is not beyond doubt. Cf. p. 170.

[2] American Naturalist, vol. xxii, 1888, pp. 201-207.

[3] Wild Animals I Have Known, 1898, p. 130; Century Magazine, vol. lix, 1900, pp. 656-660. In his lectures, Mr Seton-Thompson extends his interpretations to anterior as well as to posterior markings, especially the conspicuous and persistent facial features of deer, antelope, mongrel (or ancestral) dog, etc. Such facial markings seem especially characteristic of gregarious animals, and they are peculiarly significant as social symbols rather than as mere beacons for guidance in flight.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

302 blazon forth the alternative meanings of preference for peace or readiness for strife, like the calumet tomahawk of the Siouz warrior (as interpreted by Cushing). So the directive markings of the first class are substantially beacons of danger and fear, while those of the second are just as essentially standards of safety and confidence; and they may properly be designated as *beacon-markings* and *standard-markings*, respectively.[1] On seriating the two classes in terms of development, it is at once found that the beacon-markings are in large measure connected with excursive movement and are centrifugal in effect, while the standard-markings are connected mainly with incursive movement and are centripetal in effect; at the same time the latter express not only the higher intelligence, but also the greater degree of that conjustment which forms the basis of collective organization; so that the latter unquestionably represents the higher developmental stage. Now, the primary functions of these directive markings of the higher grade—signalization (or attentionization) and identification—correspond precisely with paramount needs of the alien-hating and clan-loving Seri; so that careful analysis would seem fully to justify the casual impression of functional similitude between the Seri face-painting and the directive markings of social animals.

While the first survey establishes a certain analogy between the primitive face-painting and the standard-markings of animals, an important disparity is noted when the survey is extended to individuals; for among beasts and birds the standards are usually the more conspicuously displayed by the males, while the paint devices of the Seri are confined to the females. A suggestion pointing toward explanation of this disparity is readily found in the seriation of developmental stages marked by (1) the fear-born beacon-markings, (2) the confidence-speaking standard-markings, and (3) the painted symbols; for the artificial devices coincide with an immeasurably advanced mental development, with concomitant advance in safety and peace on the one hand and in artificializing weapons on the other hand. This suggestion alone fails to explain the disparity fully, yet it raises another, growing out of the great social advancement connected with the mental development—i. e., the effect of the distinctively drastic organization of the human genus as represented by the Seri people. On considering this organization, it is found strictly maternal: the tribe is made up of clans defined by consanguinity reckoned only in the female line; each clan is headed by an elderwoman, and comprises a hierarchy of daughters, granddaughters, and (sometimes) great-granddaughters, collectively incarnating that purity of uncontaminated blood which is the pride of the tribe; and this female element is supplemented by a masculine element in the persons of brothers, who may be war-chiefs or shamans, and may hence dominate the movements of groups, but whose

302 614

[1] The fundamental distinction is none the less valid by reason of the occasional combination of functions, or as the catalogue "chrysanthemum" interpreted by Alice Thompson.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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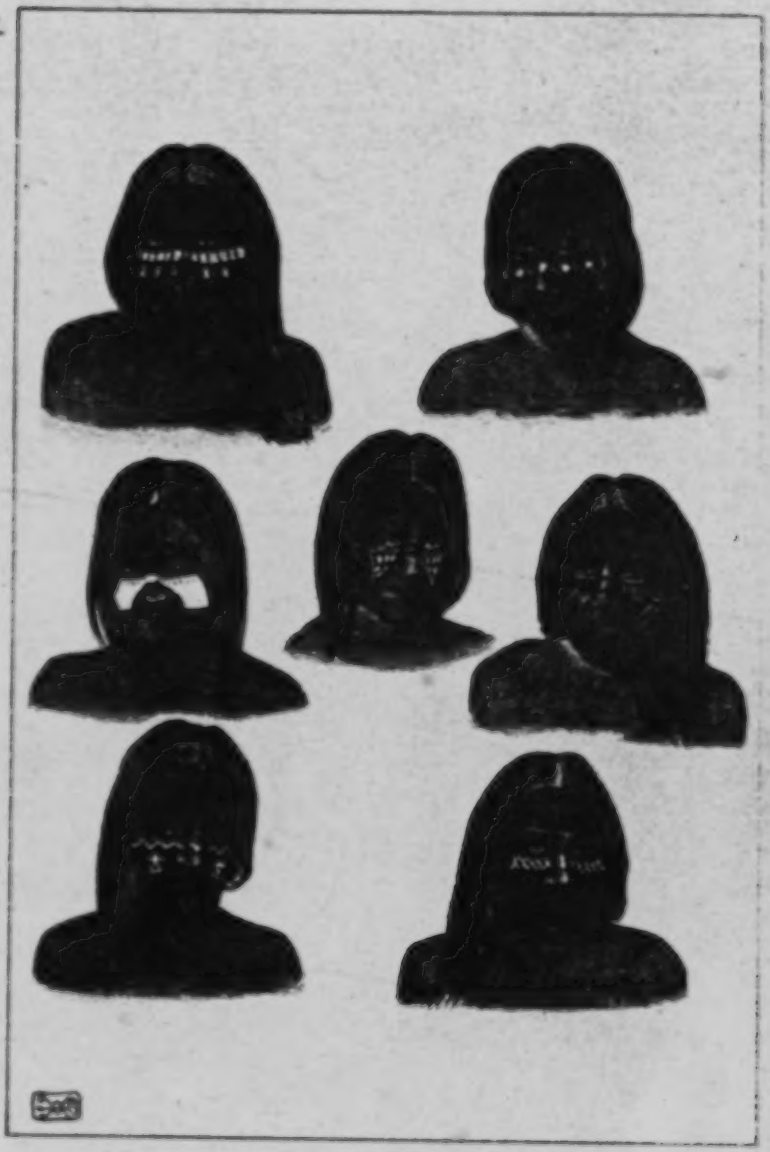

CHARACTERISTIC FACE PAINTING

(p. 168 A)

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

blood counts as nothing in the establishment and maintenance of the clan organization. Thus the females alone are the blood-carriers of the clans; they alone require ready and certain identification in order that their institutional theory and practice may be maintained; and hence they alone need to become bearers of the sacred blood-standards. The warriors belong to the tribe, and are distinguished by luxuriantly flowing hair, by the up-stepping movement from which the people derive their appellation, by their unique archery attitude, and by their dark skin-color; the boys count for little until they enter the warrior class; but on the females devolves the duty of defining and maintaining the several streams of blood on which the rigidly guarded tribal integrity depends.[1] Undoubtedly the blood-markings play an important rôle in courtship and marriage, but too little is known of the esoteric life of the tribe to permit this rôle to be traced.

In brief, the Seri face-painting would seem to be essentially *zoosematic*, or symbolic of zoic totalaries, and to signify subspecific (or subvarietal) characteristics maintained by the clan organization and kept prominent by the militant habit of the tribe; at the same time it is noteworthy that the purely symbolic motive is accompanied by a nascent decorative tendency, displayed by the individual refinement of form and color in the symbol proper to each of the groups.

DECORATION IN GENERAL.

Aside from the face-painting there is a conspicuous dearth of decoration or tangible symbolism among the Seri.

The symbolic or decorative modification of the physique would seem to be limited to two classes of mutilations, of which one was observed at Costa Rica in 1894 while the other is apparently obsolete. The observed corporeal modification is the absence of medial superior incisors of the females, in consequence of forcible removal at a period not definitely ascertained. The interpreter at Costa Rica was uncommunicative on the subject; Don Pascual opined that the mutilation formed part of an elaborate puberty ceremonial, and this opinion would seem to be corroborated by the condition of the cranium of an immature female examined by Dr Hrdlicka; but since the half-dozen adult maidens at the rancho in 1894 were free from the mutilation while all the wives bore its gruesome trace, it would seem more probable that the custom is connected with marriage. Whatever the period of the infliction, Mashém's guarded expressions seemed to indicate that it was a mark of physical inferiority; and this suggestion, interpreted in the light of the Seri use of teeth as weapons of offense and defense, would seem to indicate that the mutilation is at once the badge of corporeal inferiority and a means of maintaining the physical superiority of the males—*of course* in that theoretically fiducial but actually forceful way characteristic of primitive culture.

[1] The essentially concrete nature of Seri law and custom is set forth postea, p. 194.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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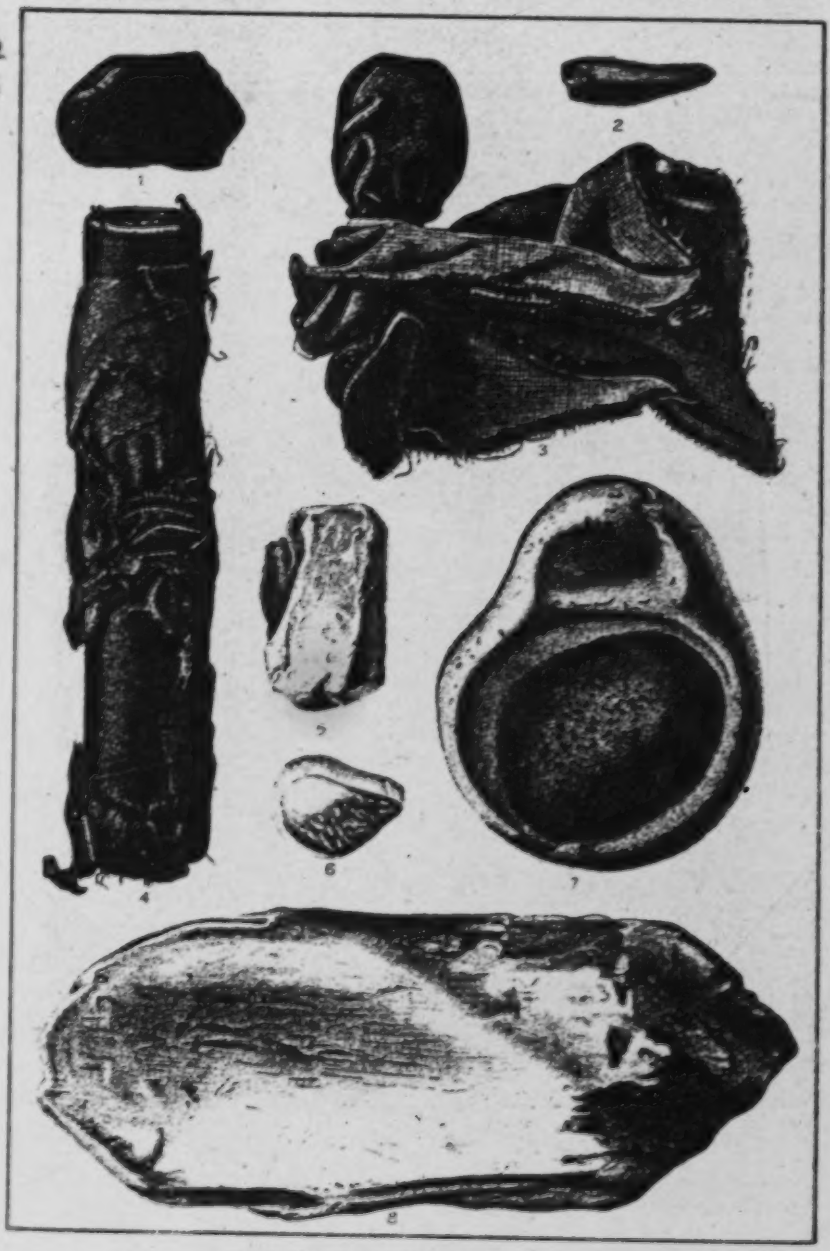

SERI FACE PAINTING PARAPHERNALIA

(p. 170 A)

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

281 apparently dried without dressing, together with
513 skins of rabbits, mountain sheep, antelope, etc, usually tattered or torn into fragments. Commonly the hides and pelts are nearly or quite in natural condition, retaining the hair, fur, or feathers. The dressing is apparently limited to scratching and gnawing away superfluous flesh, followed by some rubbing and greasing; tanning is apparently unknown. By far the most abundant of the collective possessions are the pelican-skin robes, which form
[439] the sole article of recognized barter with aliens. The aggregate stock accumulated at any time is but meager, never too much to be borne on the heads and backs of the clan in case of unexpected decamping.

412 Aside from the painting paraphernalia, there is
302 but a single conspicuous toilet article; this is a hair-brush made of yucca fiber bound into cylindrical form, as illustrated in figure 29. This article is in frequent use; both women and men give much attention to brushing their own long and luxurious locks and cultivating the hair and scalps of their children, the process being regarded as not only directly useful but in some measure sacramental. Ordinarily the hair is parted in the middle and brushed straight, the tresses being permitted to wander at will and never braided or bound or restrained by fillets save in imitation of Caucasian customs on the frontier; though in certain ceremonies the pelage is gathered in a lofty knot on the top-head.[1]

854 The Seri cradle is merely a bow of paloblanco or other switch with rude cross-sticks lashed on, as shown in figure 30. On this is laid a small pelican-skin robe, with a quantity of pelican down for a diaper, and perhaps a few pelican feathers attached as plumes to wave over the occupant's face; though on the frontier these primitive devices are largely replaced by rags.

283 Among the important appurtenances of Seri life are the cords used for belts and necklaces, as well as for the attachment of ceremonial headdresses, for converting the kilts into bags, and for numberless minor purposes. The finest of these are made from human hair; and for this purpose the combings are carefully kept, twisted into strands, and wound on thorns or sticks in slender bobbins, such as that illustrated

FIG. 31.—Hair spindle.

[1] Cf. Hardy, Travels, p. 262.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

As an illustration of the ordination in some 129
what unusual circumstances, it may be noted that when the "Seri 562
belle" (Candelaria) refused to pose for a photograph she was supported 626
by the clanmother (Juana María) until the latter was placated by presents; and that when the belle refused to obey the mother's command—to the vociferous scandal of the entire group—Juana María appealed to Señor Encinas, as the conqueror of the tribe and hence as the virtual head of both rancho and rancheria. And when a younger Seri maiden (plate XXV) similarly refused to pose, and in like manner disobeyed her mother (again to the general disgust), the latter appealed to Mashém; when he, after first exacting additional presents for both girl and mother and a double amount for himself, put hands on the recalcitrant demoiselle and forced her into the pose required, despite the shrinking and tremulous terror perceptible even in the picture.

Commonly the regimentation of family, clan, and larger group appears 592
to be indicated approximately by the placement assumed spontaneously in the idle lounging of peace and plenty. A typical placement of a small group is illustrated in plate XIV. Here the family are assembled outside the jacal, but in the relative positions which would be assumed within. The matron (a Red Pelican woman) squats in easy reach of her few and squalid possessions; on her left, i. e., in the group-background and place of honor, sits the elderwoman of the rancheria (a Turtle); then comes the daughter of the family, followed by two girl-child guests of the group, the three occupying positions pertaining to chiefs or elder brothers or, in their absence, to daughters; opposite the matron sits a younger brother,[1] whose wife is a Turtle woman (daughter of the dame in the place of honor) and matron of another jacal. A few feet behind this brother (just outside the limits of the photograph reproduced, though shown on the duplicate negative) squats the husband, with his side to the group and face toward the direction of natural approach; while the place belonging to the sons of the family on the matron's right is temporarily occupied by a White Pelican girl, together with a dog, notable in the local pack for largely imported blood and correspondingly docile disposition. The place for the babe, were there one in the family, would be on the heap of odds and ends behind the matron. As in this group so in most others, the place of the sons is vacant; for the boys are at once the most restless and the most lawless members of the tribe—indeed, the striplings seem often to ignore [858] the maternal injunctions and even to evade the rarely uttered avuncular orders, so that their movements are practically free, except in so far as they are themselves regimented or graded by strength and fleetness and success in hunting. [882]

The raison d'être of the proprietorship and regimentation reflected in 302
the everyday customs is satisfactorily indicated by that totemic feature 614
of the social organization revealed in the face-painting described in

[1] This man was one of those involved in the Robinson butchery on Tiburon island a few months before the picture was taken; and he was one of those executed or transported for the affair during the horrors between the Mex and Am expeditions.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

614 earlier paragraphs (pp. 164–169); these symbols evidently represent an
[302] exclusively maternal organization into clans consecrated to sole tutelaries. The tutelaries, or totems, together with the clan names and all personal designations connected with the totems, are highly esoteric, and were not ascertained save in the few cases mentioned above.[1]

593 It should be observed that the identification of kindred by the alien observer is difficult and somewhat uncertain, since the relationships recognized in Seri society are not equivalent to those customary among Caucasians. It was found especially difficult to identify the husband
[582] of the jacal, partly because he is commonly incongruously younger (and hence relatively smaller) than the mistress, and partly because of the undignified position of outer guard into which he is forced by the tribal etiquette. Moreover, his connection with the house is veiled by the absence of authority over both children and domestic affairs, though he exercises such authority freely (within the customary limits) in the jacales of his female relatives. There is, indeed, some question as to
[842] the clear recognition of paternity; certainly the females have no term
601 for "my father", i. e., the term is the same as that for "my mother", *em*, though the males distinguish the maternal ancestor by a suffixed syllable (*e-m*="my father"; *e-ta* or *i-taA*="my mother"), which seems to be a magnificative or an intensificative element. It is noteworthy that the kinship terminology is strikingly meager; also that while the records suggest various significant points, the material is hardly rich enough to warrant complete synthesis of the consanguineal system.

421 While the burden of the more permanent property pertains to the women, there is a decided differentiation of labor with a concomitant vesting of certain property in the warriors—the distinctively masculine chattels comprising arrows, quivers, bows, turtle-harpoons, etc. There are indications that the balsas, too, are regarded as masculine property. The impermanent possessions—water, food, etc—seem to be the common property of men, women, and children, except in so far as the
[264] right is regulated by regimentation; for the privileges of eating and drinking are enjoyed in the order of seniority. In the reckoning of
554 seniority, the chief (who is comonly such in virtue of his position as
602 nominal elder brother of a prolific dame) ranks first, and is followed by other warriors in an order affected in an undetermined way by conjugal relations as well as by their prowess or sagacity (the equivalents of age in primitive philosophy) down to an undetermined point—apparently fixed by puberty; then comes the clanmother, followed by her daughters in the order of nominal age, which is affected by the status of spouses and the number of living offspring; finally come the children, practically in the order of their strength (which also is deemed an equivalent of age), though the girls—especially those

[121] [1] The chief object of the 1895 expedition was to pursue the inquiries concerning social organization, totems, etc; but, as mentioned elsewhere, this object was defeated by the troublous history of the tribe during the earlier part of 1895, and the consequent revival and intensification of their animosity toward aliens.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

bolic weapon, the counterfeit cartridge, the imitation machete, or other charm against alien power; it is usually he who wears the white man's hat or random garment in lieu of the deer or lion mask of earlier days; and during recent years his most-prized fetish, and one which practically insures the support of his fellows, is a written certificate of his chiefship from Señor Encinas, or, still better, from El Gobernador at Hermosillo. Yet he is a throneless and even homeless potentate, sojourning, like the rest of his fellows, in such jacales as his two or three or four wives may erect, wandering with season and sisterly whim, chased often by rumors of invasion or by fearsome dreams, and restrained by convention even from chiding his own children in his wives' jacales save through the intercession of female relatives.

In 1894 the head chief was reported to be on Tiburon; the putative chief of the rancheria at Costa Rica was the taciturn giant known as El Mudo (plate XIX); while Mashem (or Juan Estorga) was the head of one of the Pelican clans.

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[648]

ADOPTION

One of the more important factors in demotic development among primitive peoples (probably second only to interclan marriage in extending sympathy and unifying law) is adoption; and special efforts were made to obtain data relating to the subject. Direct inquiries were futile, the responses indicating that the entire subject is foreign to the thought of the tribe; but three sporadic and measurably incongruous examples of quasi adoption are worthy of record.

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[124]

The most specific case is that of Lieutenant Hardy, who visited Isla Tiburon in 1826, and was fortunate in gaining the confidence of the tribe through successful medical treatment of the wife of the chief. On his second landing he was greeted with many expressions of gratitude, which were especially exuberant on the part of the daughter of the family (always a personage in Seri custom), who insisted on painting his face. He specifies:[1]

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> Not wishing to deny her the indulgence of this innocent frolic, I quietly suffered her to proceed. She mixed up part of a cake of blue color, which resembles ultramarine (and of which I have a specimen), in a small shell; in another, a white color, obtained by ground talc, and in a third was mixed a color obtained from the red flint-stone of the class which I before stated was to be found on Seal Island, and resembled cinnabar. With the assistance of a pointed stick the tender artist formed perpendicular narrow stripes down my cheeks and nose, at such distances apart as to admit of an equally narrow white line between them. With equal delicacy and skill the tops and bottoms of the white lines were finished off with a white spot. If the cartilage of my nose at the nostrils had been perforated so as to admit a small, round, white bone, five inches in length, tapering off at both ends and rigged something like a cross-jack yard, I might have been mistaken for a native of the island. As soon as the operation was finished, the whole party set up a roar of merry laughter, and called me "Hermano, Capitan Tiburon," being the very limited extent of their knowledge of Spanish.

[386]

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[1] Travels, p. 288.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

As to the "total absence" (p. 285) of marriage purchase, whereas I found it, such purchase can hardly be believed to have originated wholly within the last 35 years, in view of its wide distribution in native America.

The whole matter of maternal lineages crystallized into totemic clans with matron rule (pp. 10-11, 167-8, 269 seq.) seems a fantasy. A careful reading of the passages in questions reveals how much McGee has built up on statements which he conscientiously admits to have been slender, probable only, and subject to possible misunderstanding. It must be remembered that in 1894 the matriarchate as original and primitive was still standard anthropological doctrine. At any rate, I got nothing suggesting even matrilineal reckoning in my indirect approaches to the subject, and explicit denials when it was directly presented.

That house-building may now and then be "accompanied by a chant" (p. 223) is possible, though it seems out of accord with the haphazard and shiftless methods of Seri work and the flimsy irregularity of their homes; but that the chant was "usually led by the eldest matron" seems more matriarchate.

That the Upanguayma, Guayma, and Tepoka were successively "extruded" (p. 75) would be correct if there were anything to show that the Seri were the parent stock of superior virtue, conservatism, and faithful attachment to their original habitat.

The statement (p. 11) that "kinship terms are strikingly scanty," made in the face of round-about and imperfect speech communications with the Seri, I cite only as an indication of the degree of McGee's readiness to fall back upon his preconceptions when facts became thin.

I did not note the absence of superior medial incisor teeth observed by McGee (p. 169) in married women. If a regular practise, its connection with the puberty rite would be a natural inference. But knocking out of teeth is a rare custom in America.

McGee's statements (pp. 196-7) that it is "undignified, if not wrong" to kill deer other than with the hands, and that jackrabbits are "customarily taken alive to camp," seem over-emphases. That a sense of sport or passing pride, or lack of weapons, now and then leads to such happenings, I do not doubt; but the Seri seem too practical and unromantic to exact rules on the point. I suspect that a youth who insisted on living up to them would soon be considered a vain lore. I may add that I saw a crippled wild duck hobble about the camp on Tiburon for two days, being played with occasionally by the children—without unusual roughness or unkindliness—and that finally it wandered to the water and gradually drifted off without notice being taken.

Face painting is construed by McGee as sematic of totemic line-

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31

ages (pp. 164-167), and Hardy's story of his being painted is interpreted as ceremonial adoption (pp. 277-8). My conviction is that the Seri paint primarily for adornment, and that further significance is either secondary or absent. When I reached the island and about thirty people, including visitors from other settlements, were gathered to receive and inspect me, all the younger women and one or two adolescent boys were freshly and very neatly painted. After all, their ragged cast-off civilized garments were nothing to make a show with on a state occasion. In former times, the everyday-wear pelican robes would not have served much better. The ocher red, dumortierite blue, and gypsum white pigments however gave a chance for decoration and display. Three days later, when our party was an old story, some of the faces still carried paint, but it was worn, defaced, and bedraggled. It seems unlikely that people should greet strangers by decorating themselves with representations of lineage totems which they at the same time denied or tried to conceal from their knowledge. The construal of Hardy's painting as an adoption-rite rests on the same blood-kin interpretation. It was probably nothing more than an act of friendliness tinged with the simple humor of which the Seri have a strong sense.

Face painting in fact seems to be the chief if not only purely aesthetic expression of Seri culture, their mode of life and psychophysiological habits being such as almost to prohibit any other form of art. In this painting, on the other hand, they have achieved a high degree of stylization and taste. The designs I saw were throughout in the manner illustrated by McGee in his plates 13-16, 18, 20, 22, 24-26.

Ethnographically, the interest of this style lies in its similarity to the river Yuman face paintings. The Seri first of all specialize on a horizontal bar across the nose and cheeks, immediately below the eyes; in addition to this, there may be vertical elements dependent over the cheeks. The design deliberately breaks across the natural lines of the face in such a way as to orient itself with reference to the eyes without touching them. Bordering or enclosing of the eyes is avoided; neither are planes like the cheeks, forehead, or chin felt as fields to be filled in with decoration. The fundamental plan attacks the face at once drastically and subtly. That the style has both feeling and rigor is shown by the fact that none of the endless variations of color and design detail depart much from the basic scheme. That this scheme is old is shown by Hardy's description of a century ago. It is a true art of high order within its narrow compass.

The Mohave paintings[9] are somewhat freer and more variable, but also less classical or chaste stylistically. The transverse element

[9] Kroeber, Handbook, BAE-B 78, fgs. 60-62, 1925. With the Mohave, contrary to the Seri, the vertical elements predominate over the horizontal. The Gila Pima style (Russell, pl. 59), and the Havasupai (Spier, AMNH-AP 20:190, 1928), are also related.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

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302 below the eyes and the verticals below them are predominant in most cases. Even where the design extends above the eyes, it does not cover the forehead, but terminates in a straight edge paralleling the one below. Where the chin is involved, the Mohave bring solid triangles up from the jaw and then leave the chin itself blank, instead of accentuating its contour with color, as a less sophisticated style would do. Like the Seri, the Mohave are a people with deficient material culture and little dress suitable for display. The two tribal styles are unquestionably connected in their history.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

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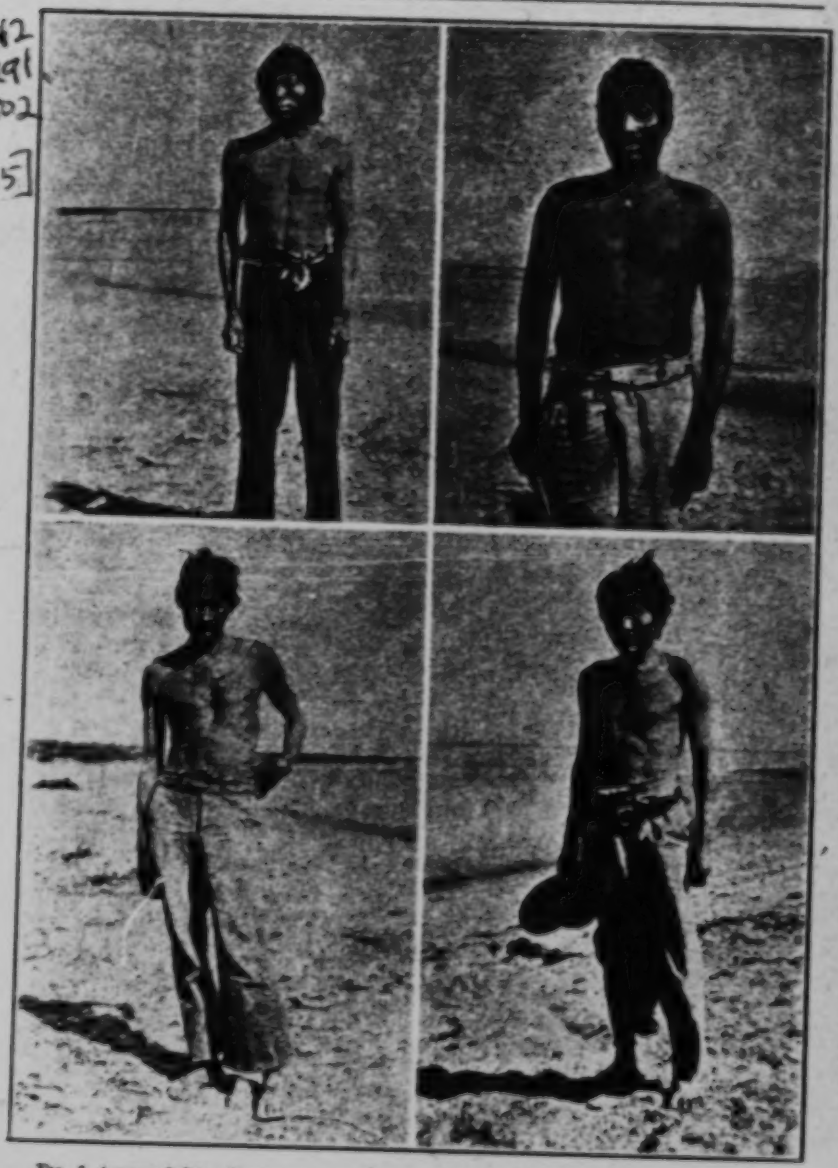

FIG. 1 (upper left). *Young man with long hair.*

FIG. 2 (upper right). *Chico Romero, official Seri chief and principal informant. The largest individual seen.*

FIG. 3 (lower left). *Elderly man of the spare Seri type.*

FIG. 4 (lower right). *Native policeman for the Mexican government.*

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31

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FIG. 5 (upper left). *Maria, wife of Chico, with their baby.*

FIG. 6 (upper right). *Heavier Seri type on beach of Tiburon Island, a bay of El Infiernillo in background.*

FIG. 7 (lower left). *Men, youth, and boy.*

FIG. 8 (lower right). *On Punta San Miguel, mainland, mangroves in background.*

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

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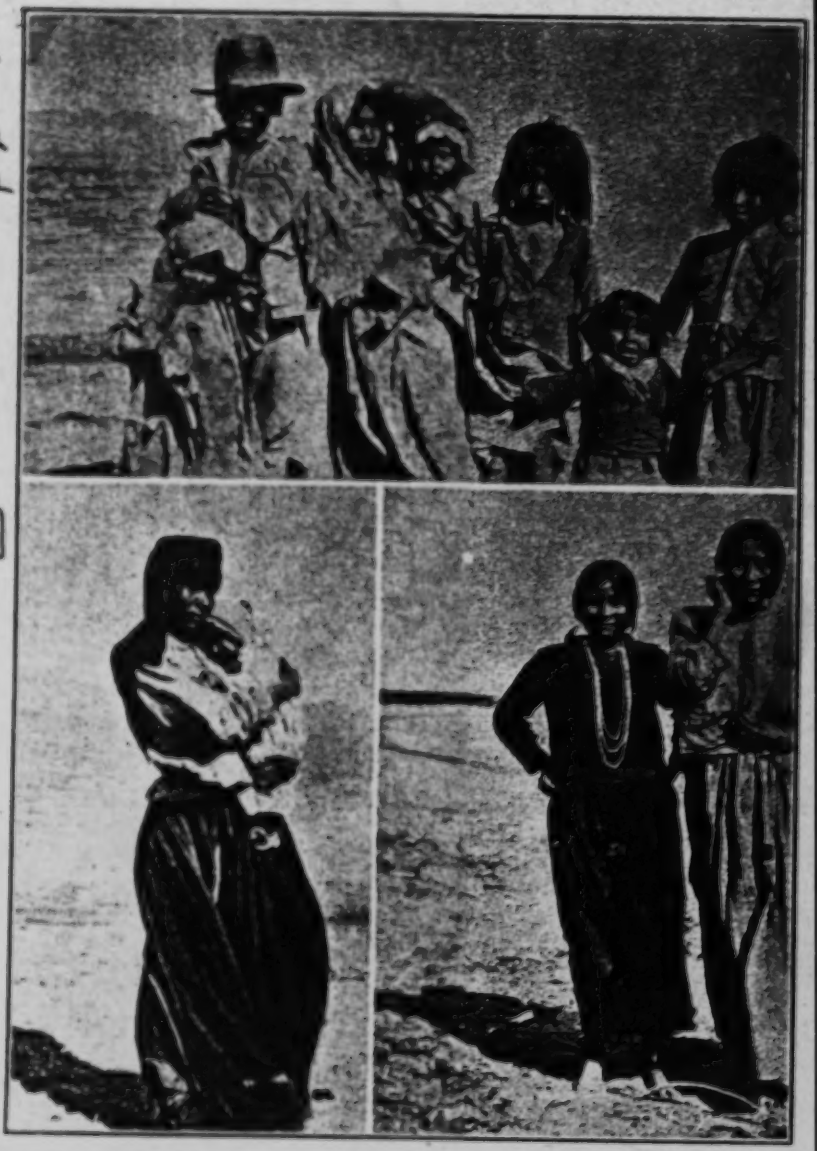

FIG. 9 (upper). *Seri children showing variety of expressions at camera experience.*
FIG. 10 (lower left). *Young woman with sickly baby.*
FIG. 11 (lower right). *Two girls, the shorter unmarried.*

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1940) 1945
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FIG. 10. SERI BELLE
WEARING A PAINTED DESIGN SUCH AS FORMERLY WAS INDICATIVE OF THE BLOOD LINE OF A GIVEN CLAN.

264 but, the rotting flesh and cartilage of its noisome interior to be explored and mouthed by the toddling children or gnawed by the cringing coyote-curs attached to the rancheria.

223 At certain seasons or when deemed propitious by the elders of the family, a pelican harvest was planned. Isla Tasne, some fifteen miles from Tiburon Island, is the haunt and breeding ground of the pelican that served not only as a valuable food supply for the Seris, but also as the chief source of apparel. At such seasons temporary rancherias were set up on the shores of Bahia Kino, and when conditions were favorable, or when hunger prompted them, the balsas [502] would be launched in the evening toward Isla Tasne, the women of the party lying prone on the cane bundles and propelling the craft by paddling with their hands or with large hatchet clam shells. Reaching the island after dark, the balsas were left in charge of the women while the men and older boys, armed with clubs, crept up over the slippery, guano-covered rocks to rush on the roosting fowls and slaughter them. The [264]

[p. 99(B)]

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1822-1942) 1965
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FIG. 11. PAINTING THE FACE
USING A RED PIGMENT OBTAINED FROM THE TORPEDO.

223 lice-infested carcasses were then gathered
264 and brought to a central place among the stinking rocks where a gluttonous feast was held in the dark, the long ahungered tribesmen gorging themselves with the soft entrails and succulent parts, and carousing in the carnage until overcome by slumber.

281 The day following the slaughter, the
294 matrons collected the carcasses with least damaged plumage and carefully removed the skins, which were then gnawed and sucked clean of flesh and grease and dried in the sun (Fig. 8). From two or more of these skins they made a kilt or robe (Figs. 1, 2), the principal apparel, not so much for protection from cold as from the scratch and prick of the abounding spines and thorns of Seriland. The skins were sewed with sinew and often held in place on the body by a
283 cord made of human hair (Fig. 1). The
302 culture of their long, luxuriant hair, indeed, was an important matter. They brushed their hair regularly with a brush fashioned

[p. 200(A)]

2:Davis & Dawson I-5 (1923-1960) 1945
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283 from coarse, wiry grass stems, and saved all
302 the brushings to be used in the making of strong threads and cords.

The fleetness of foot and remarkable physical endurance of these people attest to the
147 rigorous and difficult life in Seriland where
481 the ability of an individual to survive a season of want depended upon the reserve energy of his own body by which he could carry himself long distances in search of food and yet have strength to return to a waterhole, left miles behind. The slender, sinewy limbs and capacious chests of the Seris, in whom no trace of obesity has ever been observed, show clearly the result of untold centuries of selection of the strong by the severity of the environment, where water,
[312] too heavy for transport, too difficult of storage, is yet always within reach of an organism strong enough to journey ten, twenty, or even fifty miles in search of it.

Perhaps the most severe physical exercise
224 practiced by the Seris was the chase of animal game, particularly since it was often resorted to only after a period of weakening hunger which prompted the all-out effort to obtain adequate food supply. Days of wandering over the deserts in search of vegetable food were sometimes unrewarded, and although rabbits were to be had for the chase, they were too small to be of much consequence in the feeding of a family. The deer were fairly plentiful and provided excellently for a lasting feast.

The deer hunt was conducted by several tribesmen without weapons. When an animal was sighted it was followed by one and circled by others of the party, chased until frantic and exhausted, whereupon one of the men rushed upon it, threw it to the ground and caved in its skull with a stone.

The most avidly sought prey in the Seri chase were the helpless young and heavily pregnant does which were pursued and rent to fragments with a horrible fury, particularly with intent upon the succulent tidbits afforded by the fetal flesh.

222 A time of ease and plenty came each summer, for usually in late May or June the cactus plants with which Seriland abounds begin to mature their fruits. In the foothills of Sierra Seri on the mainland, great

3:Davis & Dawson E-6 (1925-1940) 1945
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222 forests of giant cacti (Fig. 9) provide during this season an unlimited supply of "pitahayas" toward which the tribespeople customarily moved to accomplish the annual harvest. The fruits were readily knocked down by means of long poles and, when ripe, the spines were easily brushed off, leaving a luscious pulp as big as a fig. During the height of the season all the clans withdrew from the coast and gave their undivided attention to the collection and consumption of the cactus fruit, gorging tremendous quantities for weeks until waning supply and cloying appetite drove them back to the more severe hunt for turtle and pelican.

252 262 514 Perhaps the only germ of thriftiness in the Seris is shown by a peculiar custom with respect to the pitahayas. The fruits, eaten in such enormous quantity, were imperfectly digested, the hard-coated seeds particularly passing through the body unchanged. Using [45] [25] large seashells, the feces containing these seeds were collected and preserved with some care. Thus, when the harvest of fresh fruits was over, there remained a hoard of these dry, nutritious discharges which were ground on the stone abat, winnowed in a shallow basket and made into a meal to be eaten, either dry, as a watery atole, or mixed with turtle grease to form a thick paste.

614 Although the Seri's omnipresent problems of food-getting and of personal subsistence have been of particular interest, the lost social customs of the tribe deserve a moment's attention. Before the death of all [161] but a few of the 2,000–3,000 Seris at the hands of invading Spaniard and Mexican, the tribe consisted of a number of conspicuous maternal clans, each of which was presided over by a sole tutelary such as the Pelican, the Turtle, the Rattlesnake, or the Badger. The totemic symbols denoting the 302 various beast-gods and incidentally indicating the blood-carriers of clans dedicated to 386 them, consisted of elaborate designs painted 614 upon the face (Fig. 10). In accord with their savagery in which the social organization was based on blood kinship reckoned in the female line, under ordinary circumstances, the faces only of the females were painted. Colored minerals pounded to powder afforded the pigments for the paint-

[p. 201(A)]

3:Davis & Dawson E-6 (1923-1940) 1945
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FIG. 12. SERI MOTHER AND BABE

SERI MOTHERS COMMONLY HAVE TOO MUCH MILK AND FREQUENTLY RELIEVE THEMSELVES BY SUCKLING AN ORPHANED PUPPY OR SOMETIMES EVEN A BABY PIG.

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ing, and were carried in cane tubes. The paints were carefully prepared, applied, and preserved, and, as indispensable feminine accompaniments even on the longest journeys, were among the most highly prized of the people's possessions. The importance of the face-painting custom, established in the old tribal life, remained strong even as the slaughter of the warring tribe progressed

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[p. 201(B)]

S:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1949) 1965
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302 614 and the maternal clans disappeared. Today, with the entire tribe numbering no more than 150 persons, the meaning of the painted symbols has become vague and meaningless with respect to the nonexistent clans, yet the custom persists, now largely for personal adornment, and even a male tribesman may sometimes be seen squatting before little dishes of pigments, peering into a ten cent store mirror as he carefully applies the colors (Fig. 11).

619 Had it not been for the Seris' intolerance of aliens they might today constitute a numerous and thriving people, or at least have been absorbed by the polyglot Mexican popu-

[p. 202 (A)]

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1940) 1945
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372 773 it take its two hands, rub them over its head and then rub them together a few times? The Indians noticed this and in this way we were taught by this little fly how to make fire by rubbing a stick back and forth between our two hands."

773 In response to comments about the nocturnal howling of the coyote, Chico told another interesting tribal legend. "A long time ago all fleris were birds or animals. The badger had charge of the saints or gods, which were little images carried in a pouch and hung around his neck by black strings.

[142] [302]

[643] FIG. 19. CHICO ROMERO
WHO SUCCEEDED OLD JUAN TOMAS AS CHIEF OF SERIS.

Coyote got to quarreling with badger and, watching his chance, grabbed the bag, tore it loose and ran off with it, giving his derisive laugh as he ran, and ever since coyote has been laughing at badger and all others.

[p.266(A)]

7: Marroquin E-5 (1955) 1957 NU31 Seri NU31

Distribución geográfica

000 Los indios seris viven en dos pequeñas poblaciones de la costa del Estado de Sonora, frente al Golfo de California, en Desemboque y en Punta Chueca. De allí pasan con alguna frecuencia a la Isla de Tiburón en el mencionado Golfo de California.

En Desemboque viven aproximadamente 35 familias seris y en Punta Chueca 16. Tan solo en el primero de estos dos lugares se hallan establecidas 5 familias "yoris" (mestizas).

Problemas sanitarios

Los seris carecen de defensa ante ciertas enfermedades que, como el sarampión y la gripe, adquieren en sus relaciones con los "yoris"; estas enfermedades causan muchas defunciones entre los indígenas.

[302]
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Familia indígena seri de Desemboque, Sonora. *Foto Enriqueta Yarchesco.*

Según el anciano seri Chico Romero, último gobernador seri, hubo una fuerte epidemia de viruela allá por 1897, que causó la muerte de una tercera parte de la tribu que se encontraba residiendo en Costa Rica, ranchería de la costa de Sonora.

En 1955 se propagó el sarampión entre los seris, ocasionando gran número de víctimas, niños y adultos; la actividad del maestro rural Leo Sandoval, del lingüista Eduardo Mosser y de las autoridades sanitarias de Hermosillo, lograron contener la mortalidad; no obstante, el número de defunciones llegó al 5 % del total de la población nativa.

Geographical Distribution

The Seri Indians live in two small Indian villages on the coast of the Gulf of California, State of Sonora, Desemboque and Punta Chueca. From there they frequently go to Isla Tiburón in the Gulf of California. 131 [484]

Approximately 35 Seri families live in Desemboque and 16 in Punta Chueca. Only in the first of these two places are there five "yori" (mestizo) families. 162 [563]

Sanitary Problems

The Seris have no defense against certain diseases which, like measles and flu, they acquire in their relations with the "yoris"; these diseases cause many deaths among the Indians. According to the an- 164 731 [751]

[291] [854] [302]

Seri Indian woman of Desemboque, Sonora. *Photo Henriette Yurchenco.*

cient Seri Chico Romero, last Seri Governor, there was a great smallpox epidemic there about 1897 which caused the death of a third of the tribe which was living in Costa Rica, a small ranch on the coast of Sonora.

In 1955 measles appeared among the Seris, with a great number of victims, children and adults; the actions of the rural teacher Leo Sandoval, the Linguistic Eduardo Mosser and of the sanitation authorities of Hermosillo, succeeded in keeping the mortality rate down; nevertheless, the number of deaths reached 5% of the total native population. [165] [744]

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Seri Indians

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Blind Seri Indian, 1939
Best paddler we had

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Candelario completes his decoration one of our paddlers - 1936

123 handed to show their friendliness.

142 One was a young man with rather pleasant features, his braided
291 hair hanging below his shoulders. His name was Antonio Herrera. The
123 other was a wild-looking specimen called Ramon Blanco. His hair was a
[302] tangled mat with a short braid behind, suspicious black piercing eyes,
long sparse moustache and chin-beard hiding a broad cruel mouth. He
[411] wore the remnants of an old sweater, a short dirty kilt, or skirt,
nearly to his knees, a belt full of cartridges, mostly empty, and a
long knife in a rawhide scabbard.

123 The young man had been baptized and given a name by Roberto, who
[785] had acted as godfather or *patrona*, many years ago. He wore a hat,
[291] jacket, and pants of blue denim, and *guaraches*, or sandals of rawhide.

We shook hands all around and then they called and halloed in the brush and soon three women and a lot of children, wild and half-
[415] clothed, filed into camp. The women were tall, gaunt, unkempt, ragged
[482] and barefooted, paying us not the slightest notice. They were bearing
[423] on their heads large baskets filled with all their earthly posses-
[854] sions---cooking ollas, scraps of cloth, pieces of turtle meat, bone
[231] brads, hair brushes, and odds and ends. They carried, also, an infant or two wrapped in odd bits of rags. Several gaunt dogs followed in their wake.

342 In all, three families came trailing in, removed their household equipment from their heads and resumed their interrupted and primitive
[542] housekeeping. Each family occupied its apartment in the row of brush shelters, separated from each other only by brush partitions with a total lack of privacy. These shelters, always open to the sea, serve as shade from the fierce rays of the sun, and also as windbreaks, but
[361] are no protection from infrequent rains. They are occupied only for a brief period and then their nomadic tenants move on to fresh *cahuama*, or sea turtle range.

123 Soon, a third man arrived while we were near the huts, Manuel
[142] Encina. He was a man of sixty-five, gray hair and mustache, seamed features, and not evil looking. He was out of breath. He had gone for water to the same water hole where we had been yesterday, struck our tracks, had left his water cans and hurried back to warn his people. He was greatly relieved to find friends.

Since he had gone for water, inquiry revealed there had been no water in camp for two days, and six adults and one girl of thirteen and six children were thirsty. We gladly gave them one of our five-
[225] gallon cans of water and they were very grateful. They had caught a
[262] sea turtle the day before and gave us some turtle steaks which looked like beef or mutton.

312 As the camp was without water and we were running short, the young
482 man and Encina offered to get some. Each took a *palanca*, or short
123 shoulder pole with knotched ends, fitted empty five-gallon cans in

Seri - wild boy - 1924

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[297]

Seri child

261 will exist on very small rations, bear burdens, and walk long dis-
262 tances. Their food is anything that walks, flies, crawls or swims,
[253] and they eat it raw with the same relish that we eat it cooked. There is but one thing they will not eat; they draw the line on the Gila monster. They are the most perfect type of human being adapted to desert conditions that exists today. Convey them blindfolded many miles into the heart of the desert, empty-handed, remove their blinders, and they will find both food and water where others would perish. The Papagos and Yaquis do almost as well."

302 We gave the women a small bag of flour and three or four cubes of
[123] sugar around, and the men three packets of tobacco each and two boxes of matches. Matches with them are very precious and are rarely used. Rather than use a match a woman came over to our fire and borrowed some coals to rebuild her fire. From this point the nearest matches are a good deal over one hundred and twenty miles distant, so they have to economize in every thing.

422 Each rag is valuable, and flour, sugar, coffee and rifle shells
[434] are absolutely priceless. While they know money, it has no value here.
[437] Only commodities go here. The most highly prized things are boards to
[389] make boats and rifle shells to get game and protect themselves. All empty shells are saved, the primer punched out, straightened, a match head put in, a little pinch of powder on top, the shell filled up, a long bullet inserted, the shell pinched tight, and a fresh set of ammunition is made.

142 The women and children certainly did look wild. Their hair was
291 frowsy and unkempt, their skirts and waists a patchwork of dirty rags
302 coming just below the knees; their features seamed and hard and cruel. Their complexion was very dark. They had no under garments. The children wore only a dirty shirt coming a little below their thighs, and even that is ragged. One or two of the women had a dirty bandanna over their heads. How I wished I could have seen them in their ancient, picturesque pelican-skin kilts!

302 I happened to witness the operation of a Seri beauty parlor. A
[029] mother brushed the hair of her thirteen-year-old daughter with a brush
[293] made from the fibrous roots of a certain grass tied together with
[515] sinew. During the operation if she came across a *piojo*, and she found several, she plucked him away from his feeding ground and dropped him in the fire.

The hair neatly brushed, the mother then mixed paint in a small vessel and with a tiny stick painted a bright blue design under the eyes and across the cheeks and nose, and then she added narrow white stripes, which, contrasting with the blue and the dark skin, produced a very striking effect. This paint is easily removed and the women often paint and remove three different face designs in one day.

304 I did not see tattoo work on either men or women, nor did they
301 wear ceremonial feathers as did our western Indians.

wear ceremonial feathers as did our western Indians. I saw no skin or cutaneous disease, or evidence of tuberculosis or of trachoma---the curse of our Indians.

One boy-child of five years was a handsome child---fat, round, sturdy, with roving great black eyes, large thick lips, a picture of perfect health. He was almost naked. His hair was done in a pigtail with a red string braided into it. His face like all the others was dirty, but he waded into the shallow water with a short spear and I saw him catch two crabs with his little harpoon. The water did not bother his face.

They had no plates or eating tools, except large deep clam shells, cast up by the sea, which served as cups and dippers. Their long, keen belt knives were used for cutting, carving or skinning, and always the fingers for eating. They gathered in a circle around an olla of seeds of long grass growing on the sea bottom prepared by winnowing, parching and grinding, and then cooked with turtle oil. Each one dipped his or her fingers into the olla and conveyed them to the mouth without losing a drop, and licked them off with great relish.

The dogs eat with the family. There were six or seven half-starved ones. If someone picked up a piece of turtle flipper the dog often took the first lick at it, bit off a piece or licked it before it reached the owner's mouth. The dogs were not punished. They were just slapped to keep them out of the pots.

We had a great time that evening in Seriland. The young man played his violin. This consisted of a hollow box cut out of a *palo verde* tree, and a piece of pine about sixteen inches long; terminating in a hollow where a single peg was fitted. The one string was twisted deer sinew, and the bridge was a small round clam shell at the far end. The bow was a small bent stick and some black horsehair. On the handle was a wad of rosin fastened underneath. By fingering this string a few weak squeaky notes were made, and this was the classical music of the Seris.

Manuel Encina seized his gourd rattle and began chanting. Herrera tapped a tin can and I beat on an inverted basket and the orchestra was in full swing. A young girl, Rosa, dragged out a turtle shell and standing on it began to dance. This dance consisted of stepping up and down quickly with each foot alternately, and this stamping, barefooted, emitted a hollow sound. Every once in a while I let out an Indian yell which pleased the Seris very much. For two hours they had a real swell time. We took one flashlight of the proceeding.

Each family was in their hut, which afforded very slight shelter as they were only partially roofed over and the sides were broken down in places. The huts were all adjoining and each had a little campfire, which did not give much illumination, so the dancing was in semi-darkness.

[text continues on p. 163]

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Poised for harpooning sea turtles off Tiburon Island - 1936

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The catch

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Seri faces

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Seri young man

Seri Indian

123 [202] It was a beautiful morning in early May, and the water was still as a pond, reflecting all the sunrise tints like a mirror. After a breakfast of clams and broth, bread and sand and bronco tea, we made a big smoke and were answered by a similar smoke two miles off, so we knew our friends were on the way.

123 482 [415] In one hour they began trailing in, the women each with a load on her head, walking graceful and erect. On one head was an inverted turtle shell containing nearly all the family belongings done up in rags. On the top was the most precious belonging of all---the rifle. The man carried two or three ollas and other things on a shoulder stick. Everything necessary for their home was carried on their heads.

123 Soon the Indian Blanco was seen paddling in his *balsa;* he also had a load and had paddled all the way from Ironwood camp against wind and sometimes tide. As they were all very thirsty we gave them water around. They immediately went to the shore as it was low tide, and began gathering small oysters from the rocks. Soon each woman returned with a half bushel of them on her head.

About three o'clock and for an hour or so thereafter, Antonio Herrera, the Chief's son Chico, the old Chief Juan Tomas, two other men and one woman, came drifting into camp with their dogs. Each one was loaded with things. They were a pretty wild looking bunch. There was very little food and little water for so many.

648 731 The Chief said that a day or two before, some of his men had a fight with some sailors (Mexicans) on the Island of San Estevan four or five miles off the south west corner of Tiburon. Nobody was killed, but the two boats, the wealth of the Island, had drifted away and were lost, leaving eight men marooned on the Island. They had gone there to gather *sescal* to make drink to celebrate a wedding to come off soon. Three men were five days without water. They sent up frantic smoke signals every day. At last they were seen, and help went for them in the only remaining boat on the Island. They were rescued.

648 484 123 The Chief and his men and women, with us, are going to Hermosillo ninety miles afoot with all their belongings to ask the Government for food and help.

142 [622] The Chief looks to be seventy years old, a grim dark-skinned individual with a thin fringe of hair on his upper lip, broad nose, wide nostrils, small black eyes. He is well-built and erect. None of these that I have seen so far have any fat. They are lean and sinewy. [302] [291] The young men are of large build, high cheek bones, some with hair on their lips, their long black hair braided; sometimes with a strand of red worsted. All were either barefooted or wore sandals. I saw one pair of sandals made out of turtle hide; another of burro hide.

648 123 When the Chief arrived, the sail of a vessel was seen over the beach. Bob recognized it as belonging to a launch of a Yaqui Indian

[text continues on p. 180]

123 but nothing happened.

123 We reached Hermosillo at three in the afternoon, and as we landed
622 Roberto and Sara met us, and Roberto embraced me. Then the Seri
[116] Indian Chief rushed up and fairly hugged me in his joy at seeing me again. A timid wild-looking Seri boy, of fifteen years of age, shyly shook hands with the *Americano*, while all the Mexican men and women, fully one hundred in number, looked on open-mouthed and wide-eyed, to see the Chief of the wildest and lowest of savage Indians in North America, rush up and embrace a white man.

We all climbed into Roberto's auto-truck, and my things were brought to Hotel Cohen, and then we all went to Roberto's home and stayed all the afternoon. He had just returned from the coast the day before, and Juan Tomas was determined to come also and greet me, and the boy---a nephew---hung on to the Chief, and finally Roberto said he would have to return on foot if he brought him. Juan Tomas said that made no difference. He would walk to the coast eighty or ninety miles, if only he could come.

[291] He was probably seventy-five years old. He wore a hat, but his
[302] hair was straggly and he had a slight moustache. He wore shirt and trousers and a dirty kilt---remanent of the Pelican-skin-kilt---around his waist, and he was barefooted. The boy had a not unpleasant face, long wild hair, shirt, pants, and a cotton kilt reached to his knees. He, too, was barefooted.

I gave the Chief a knife, and the boy a red crayon and fifty cents. With the crayon he made a V on his kilt. He was very shy and always kept in a shadow, or in the background, and he spoke no Spanish although he knew the Spanish alphabet.

Sara showed some photographs and postcards in a baloptican in a dark room, and among them were pictures of some Seris and myself. These created much excitement with the Chief and the boy, and they jabbered together in the Seri language with animation. They recognized some of the subjects, their own people.

584 Juan Tomas is to be married soon to an elderly Seri dame, and we
622 have been invited to attend the fiesta. He has been laying in the
648 trousseau for the bride, and several gallons of mescal. A steer or
123 burro will have to be provided, and all the fixin's and nothing will be left undone to make a very festive occasion. When asked to show us his gifts he reluctantly brought forth a package which he carefully unwrapped and disclosed eighteen yards of *manta*, two red pieces and one pink piece of Calico, some red handkerchiefs, and one box for painting the face. He carefully wrapped these up again and put them in the room set apart for him and the boy.

[608] The woman he is to marry has no male relatives from whom she can
[583] be bought, so the Chief appointed a man and created him Uncle *pro-tempore*, and to him the Chief is going to give a rifle and a blanket as the purchase price. Pretty high!

123 Clustered near this well were brush windbreaks joined together, divided
[36] by brush partitions all open on one side. Here were gathered several
[3/2] Seri families. There was no such thing as privacy or seclusion.
[3/2]

As soon as we stopped and unloaded we were immediately surrounded by a curious, half-starved mob of forty men, women and children, about fifteen to twenty children. All dirty, all ragged, all hungry. Some of them I recognised: others were new to me.

While preparing and eating our supper this motley crowd formed a circle about us and hungrily watched every mouthful. We gave them a little food and an orange all around, and they finally left. By that time we had also finished our bread and coffee and followed to the brush shelters.

535 A dance was immediately started. A place was hollowed in the sand,
123 a few short planks placed over it, and the dance was on. Music was
[53] furnished by men tapping on an inverted basket and chanting. Only one man danced at a time. Sand was thrown over the planks and the Indian danced a shuffle, scraping his bare feet on the boards. He held a staff in his right hand and danced to a song called in Spanish *El*
[37] *Toro*. Later on other dancers performed, then gave us the *venadó* (deer) dance, taught them by the Yaquis.

This dancer represents a timid deer, hopping up and down to the time of a rattle held in the right hand, and the chanting of the singers. The *venado* dancers stooped over frequently, turning first to one side and then the other to look behind. Manuel Encina was the *venado* and Chico Romero, a very large young Seri, acted the part of a coyote, crawling and jumping on all fours and barking and every once in a while biting the calf or thigh of the *venado*, then jumping back and barking. It was acted with great realism, and the onlookers, especially the children, enjoyed it immensely.

A wilder, more barbaric scene was probably seldom witnessed in America than this gathering of Seris on the shores of the Gulf of California, dancing the *venado*. The camp fire threw a flickering light over dark fierce faces with low foreheads and frowsy unkempt hair.
[30] One man, Luis Torres, the head "ship carpenter" with a moustache and chin beard, his hair low-down framing his dark face, looked like a savage from the wilds of New Guinea. Another, Santo Blanco, a secondary chief below Juan Tomas, has a straggling moustache curling over cruel projecting lips which rarely smile, while his fierce black eyes peering through his black thatch of hair, have a perpetual scowl. The monotonous sing-song chant accompanied by the soft roar of the surf added an indescribable eeriness and weirdness to the dark night.

123 We soon turned in as it was then eleven o'clock, and we all fell asleep lulled by the waves of the sea.

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Seri Indians at home

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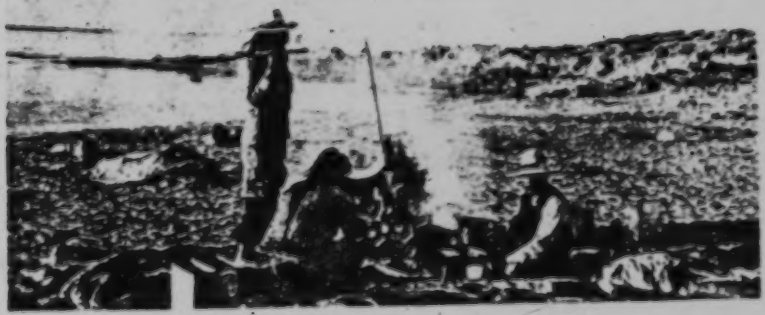

Seri Indians preparing their meal

177 been fastened with a string---each child eager for a safety pin. A
123 little child two and a half years old was shoved forward for a pin, its round black eyes dancing with anticipation, but its dress had no opening in front, so I laughed and shook my head and everyone appreciated the joke. But, not to be defeated, a little girl untied the child's waist from behind and spread it open, exposing its little brown body from head to feet, and called my earnest attention to it. I then pinned up the dress. Then the older ones crowded around me, but I had used up a whole paper of pins, so I shook my head. I gave the empty paper to an eager child, although a dozen hands were outstretched for it. By making the children happy I pleased the parents.

123 By this time the flour soup was thick and ready, and Roberto baled it out with a cup into the various vessels eagerly outstretched to receive it. As the cup would drip, little hands caught the priceless drops before they reached the sand. As each got his proportion he began sticking his fingers into the mess and licking them off. Many took their *pinole* to camp and the others secured a taste also. A small piece of bread dropped into the sand was snatched up, by a child, from under the nose of a dog. She rubbed off the sand and devoured it.

When all had vanished to their various camps I opened the box of candies---small round drops of green, red and yellow. I filled our coffee pot and went to each camp and gave each man, woman and child about ten candies..

439 Since I wanted shell necklaces, the women had combed the beaches
123 and gathered plenty of shells, and strung them while resting. This evening they were draped about their necks, and they wished to trade, so I traded for about a dozen---one small round mirror for one, five needles for another, five safety pins for another, blue face paint for another. Mirrors were most in favor.

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206 *Seri outside beauty parlor*

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Maria Jesusa - Great grand-daughter of Lola Casanova and Coyote Iguana. She is self-conscious and embarrassed to face the white man's magic box for the first time. Her face is decorated in blue, in a typical Seri design. Her features are more regular and attractive than the pure Seri and her clothing shows more taste and pride than her half sisters. Taken at La Cruz, island of Tiburon---E.H.D.

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Seri beauties

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Juan Tomas - Chief of Seris, 1922

622 Thus passed a very striking character among the primitive races of Sonora, Mexico. He was brave and fearless in battle; crafty, cautious, and cunning in attack; cruel and merciless to his enemies. He was rarely caught off his guard, and always managed to extricate himself and his men from difficult situations. He was quick to think and act, and was wise with the wisdom learned at first hand on desert and sea from a rugged nature, reluctant to give up her secrets. He was a master hand at *balsa* building, a good hunter, fisherman, harpooner of *cahuama* (sea turtle), a good surfman, a good gambler, and an expert [575] tracker. It was not unusual to possess two or three wives, but the old Chief, while married three times, had only one wife at a time. He was quite fond of the writer, and used to greet him with the true Mexican *abrazo*.

[123] It was in 1922 that I first met the grim old warrior on the shores of Tiburon, whither I had gone on a quest for the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York.

[142] He was very dark, of medium height, thick set, with a broad, deep chest, very muscular, with shaggy brows and deep set eyes which, even at that age, ninety years, burned like coals of fire, and were sus- [302] picious and wary. He wore a braided pigtail down his back which con- 290 tained a few gray hairs. For clothing, he wore a ragged shirt and an [411] old pair of overalls, with a short kilt hanging from a belt, through which stuck a long naked knife of hoop iron, ground on abrasive rocks and keen as a razor.

[291] From infancy to the grave, the freedom of his feet was never [489] hampered by shoes. Even at that advanced age, and until his last illness, he was perfectly able to care for himself, and follow his nomadic tribe on its devious trails along the coast and far in the interior. A walk of a hundred miles was not unusual. For ten rifle cartridges a Seri Indian once walked forty or fifty miles to deliver my message to Juan Tomas. From the time we first met, our friendship was never broken.

12: Moser L-5 (no date) 1964
(ca. 1960) NU31 Seri NU31

SERI BLUE

MARY BECK MOSER
SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS
SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA

ABSTRACT

The blue which the Seri Indians of Sonora, Mexico, use in face painting is not the mineral dumortierite, as previously believed, but is a prepared pigment. This paper is a description of the process in which three elements are combined to produce this pigment.

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McGee and Kroeber reported the mineral dumortierite as the source of the blue pigment used in Seri face painting (McGee 1898: 165-6; Kroeber 1931: 27). Coolidge described two blues, one a mixture of gypsum and a boiled root, the other a blue stone found on Tiburon Island (Coolidge 1939: 200). Xavier mentioned dumortierite and commercial bluing. She also referred to a third blue obtained from a plant on Tiburon (Xavier 1946). Present investigation has shown that as far as the Seri know, the only blues they have ever used are *ika?óil* "to cause to be blue" (commercial bluing) and the highly prized *?antezj kóil* "blue clay" of their own manufacture.[1]

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The components and the method of manufacture of *?antezj kóil* are said to have been taught to the women long ago by *?ant i?akímxoj* "they who tell the things about the earth." The actual color transformation is veiled in mystery to the Seri who say that if the process of making the clay is observed by any girl who has not passed the menarche, the blue will not appear. Its appearance is not attributed to shaman power, however.

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?antezj kóil has been in less demand during the last few decades since commercial bluing has been readily available. Nevertheless, *?antezj kóil* is the blue preferred by those women who continue to adorn their faces in the traditional manner.

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The three ingredients used in making the blue clay are the root bark of *xkoktz (Franseria dumosa)*, *iki kóizj* "to grind with" (a mixed clay in which montmorillonitic layers predominate), and *mokni óoxW* "excrement (sap) of *mókni (Guaiacum coulteri)*." The Seri say that the *iki kóizj* and the *mókni* are found only on Tiburon Island. The root bark of *tinkl (Franseria ambrosioides* Cav.) or of *xneejan siiktoj (Stegnospermum halimifoliam)* can be used instead of *xkoktz*. *tinkl* gives a distinct aroma to the clay. The plants mentioned are fairly common along the Sonoran coast.*

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: It is interesting to note that none of the ingredients is blue in its unaltered state.

To use the clay as paint, a bit of water is placed on a stone and the clay is rubbed into it to make a paste. It is then applied to the face (Fig. 4). It spreads smoothly and adheres firmly to the skin. The blue was formerly used for decorating pottery, clay figurines, headdresses, fetishes, arrows, wrist guards, and cane gaming sticks, as well as for face painting. In curing the sick, the shaman sometimes used the blue for painting crosses on the patient's chest. Also, women made necklaces using beads formed from the blue clay.

FIG. 4. Painting the face with the finished pigment.